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SUBJECT: A/S WELCH'S MEETINGS JUNE 4 WITH QATAR'S HEIR
APPARENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary. A/S David Welch met with the Qatari leadership, including Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and later with Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ), June 4 to discuss Iran, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine. Relaxed and well-prepared, Sheikh Tamim, who handles defense and intelligence issues, evaluated bilateral relations as "good" and said he would consider visiting the U.S. soon. A/S Welch encouraged additional high-level visits. Tamim and HBJ said Qatar could help more on Iran if it had details of the U.S.-EU offer to Tehran. HBJ expressed concern that Iran would seek to dominate the region in the case of a diplomatic settlement to the nuclear issue. Neither interlocutor was sanguine about the situation in Iraq; HBJ said that Iraqi Sunnis needed to be dragged into the political process if there was any hope. Ambassador provided Embassy Baghdad's document on how Qatar can help support stability in Iraq. Sheikh Tamim said that Qatar would not object if the Arab League directed the \$50 million Qatari donation to the International Mechanism for the Palestinians -- if the procedure had the approval of Mahmoud Abbas. Both Tamim and HBJ said that squeezing Hamas was counterproductive and that it should be given a chance at governance. End Summary.

Iran

2. (S) A/S Welch briefed the Heir Apparent on the U.S. effort to solve the Iranian nuclear crisis diplomatically by strengthening the European negotiating package, provided Iran suspends enrichment. If Iran rejects the offer, he said, the U.S. will consider its options under a Chapter VII UN Security Council resolution.

3. (S) Sheikh Tamim noted Qatar's historically good relations with Iran and expressed his government's desire that the crisis be solved peacefully. He said putting economic or military sanctions on Iran would be counterproductive because it would make President Ahmedi-Nejad more popular. We don't want Iran to come out a "loser," he said, because the consequences of that could be worse. The outside world could not be sure of Iran's internal political dynamics. However, he agreed that Iran should make concessions.

4. (S) Sheikh Tamim expected that Qatar would have further opportunities to discuss the situation with Iranian officials in the near future, and he offered to convey the message that the U.S. proposal is serious. At this point, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed al-Mahmoud pointed out that any Qatari message would be more effective if the Qataris knew more details of the U.S./EU incentives package to be discussed with the Iranians shortly. Otherwise, he said, the Iranians would have no reason to give weight to the Qataris' message. Sheikh Tamim agreed; A/S Welch said he understood.

5. (S) In a separate meeting, Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani reported that he had just returned from Riyadh where he discussed Iran with his GCC counterparts. He had also made a tour of the Gulf to determine how GCC members can unify their positions. He also noted that it was not helpful that they were uninformed about U.S.-EU discussions. The Omani-led GCC mission to Iran has been cancelled because "we don't want them to go without a clear picture," he said.

6. (S) HBJ characterized the nuclear issue as a "dangerous game" whether it is solved through negotiations or by UN Security Council actions. "Our concern is how Iran behaves if it is solved peacefully," he said, because Iran is looking for a larger role in the Gulf. Qatar talks to Iran as an equal, he said, and this is important. Gulf states have not forgotten the days of the Shah, when Iran treated its small neighbors with little regard.

7. (S) HBJ expressed his hope that Iran will accept the U.S. offer. After Welch had given him a heads-up, he spoke to Iran Supreme National Security Council SecGen Ali Larijani on June 2 and urged him to agree to it. Larijani told him that Iran can't accept anything with conditions. HBJ was not sure if Iran would accept, but he would "research" it further.

Iraq

18. (C) Sheikh Tamim expressed a negative view of conditions in Iraq. The new government is the "only good side" whereas security remains poor. He was not optimistic.

19. (C) Tamim said "the intention is there" to attend the Arab League conference planned for Baghdad in late June. However, he expressed concern about the role of the meeting now that an Iraqi government has been formed. He agreed "totally" with A/S Welch that Arab states need to visit Iraq in order to provide support and establish intra-Arab ties.

110. (C) In his meeting, HBJ described Iraq as "like civil war." The problem, he said, is that now the Shia have the "upper hand;" Kurds have made some achievements; and the Sunnis "feel lost in the middle" with no power and no oil. It would be difficult to improve the situation. HBJ also supported "building Iraq as part of the Arab world.... But if we go there, it shows were accepting the situation" that is harmful to Iraqi Sunnis. He said Qatar has indicated that it will welcome a visit from PM Nour al-Maliki.

111. (C) "My fear," HBJ said, is that Iraq will be a training ground for terrorists as Afghanistan was for the Taliban. It could create people like bin Laden. "It's the right place to hide, train and kill," HBJ said.

112. (S) Tamim said that Qatar has good relations with a number of Sunni tribal leaders and had offered its good offices previously. "They still can help," he said. On the same subject, HBJ said that the U.S. and allies have to "drag the Sunnis to dialogue"; Iraq will not see quiet without this happening. Ambassador Untermyer passed the minister a letter from Ambassador Khalilzad outlining ways Qatar can help support and strengthen Iraq.

Israel/Palestine -----

113. (S) A/S Welch outlined a way forward on the peace process in which the Israelis make credible, sustained efforts to negotiate with the Palestinians. The U.S. would like to see Hamas change its policy, he said, but meanwhile something needed to break the logjam on the Palestinian side. While short of U.S. conditions, one way to do that would be for Hamas to accept the Palestinian prisoners' document which includes accepting Israel and honoring agreements. He outlined a funding mechanism that will allow humanitarian assistance to reach the Palestinians.

114. (S) Sheikh Tamim agreed with A/S Welch on the need for Hamas to change but pointed out that the Palestinians are facing serious internal divisions now. He advised giving Hamas a "chance" because it's a government now, not a "group," and the only way to peace is through them. Hamas must work with Fatah -- at least in public. The Israeli/Palestinian issue is the biggest problem in the Middle East; Tamim offered his services in any capacity to help solve it. But "both sides should sacrifice," he said.

115. (C) Sheikh Tamim said that Qatar would have no objection if the Arab League decided to use its \$50 million donation through the proposed International Mechanism. Tamim advised to let the Palestinians agree on the mechanism first. "If the Palestinians agree, no other country will have an objection," he said.

116. (C) HBJ pointed out that in the current Arab social landscape, "If you are against the U.S., you are a hero." For this reason, he advised, "don't besiege Hamas." Instead, let them rule, and they will fail. He reminded his audience that he is personally no friend of Hamas or its ideology.

Bilateral Relations -----

117. (C) A/S Welch asked Sheikh Tamim to consider a visit to the U.S. to get to know American officials and help strengthen bilateral ties. We need a more regular pattern of high-level visits, he said. Tamim replied that he will consider the offer. He said that he believes relations are "very good," though there are some occasional disagreements between the two countries, which is "normal."

118. (C) HBJ said that he wants time to carefully prepare before any official visit by the Amir to the U.S. so that it will be successful. There is a lot to discuss, he said. He will determine whether an Amiri visit is possible in the second half of July, as suggested by the NSC, and let Ambassador Untermyer know. A/S Welch said that other high-level visits would be welcome.

119. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/S Welch.
UNTERMEYER